



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Shepard Building
255 Westminster Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Elliot Krieger, Communications – (401) 222-8471
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Education Commissioner Gist: Rhode Island is leading the way Gist commends leaders, teachers, students for a year of accomplishments

In her 3rd annual State of Education Address tonight (May 1, 2012), Education Commissioner Deborah A. Gist assured a joint session of the General Assembly that Rhode Island is recognized around the country as a leader in public education.

“Even in these tough economic times, when other states are cutting funding and programs, Rhode Island remains committed to public education,” Gist said. “People around the country recognize that Rhode Island is leading the way in public education – and we should be proud of that!”

During her address, entitled “Leading the Way: The State of Education in Rhode Island 2012,” Gist cited several accomplishments from the past year, including significant improvements on the National Assessment for Educational Progress (“The Nation’s Report Card”) and receipt of a \$50-million federal Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant – making Rhode Island one of only six states to receive two Race to the Top awards.

She also cited several statewide education initiatives that have helped to transform education in Rhode Island, including:

- beginning annual evaluations to give all teachers and principals feedback and to improve teaching and learning;
- delivering mentoring and support for every new teacher;
- training more than 4,300 educators in the new, world-class Common Core standards;
- supporting charter public schools that provide options for families and provide models to improve education across the state;
- working with communities to accelerate the lowest-achieving schools toward greatness;
- developing user-friendly data systems to provide better reports for the public and to provide teachers with information about the strengths and needs of their students; and
- building the Uniform Chart of Accounts to provide all school leaders and the public with information and guidance on school spending.

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Telephone 401-222-4600 **Fax** 401-222-6178 **TTY** 800-745-5555 **Voice** 800-745-6575

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“Preparing all students, including our students in adult-education programs, for college and for challenging careers is the greatest investment we can make in our future,” Gist said. “Investment in public education is essential to the economic development and the future prosperity of our state.”

Gist recognized several students, teachers, school leaders, schools, and districts for their accomplishments and awards received over the past year, but she also noted that transforming education is an on-going challenge.

“While we are leading the way on many fronts, we have a long way to go to meet our goals,” Gist said. “We must improve our performance, especially in mathematics,” she said, particularly at the high-school level.

Gist emphasized that her highest priority is ensuring that Rhode Island has excellent teachers in every classroom.

“Our teachers are first and foremost professionals. As professionals, teachers need and deserve the latitude and the responsibility to make decisions within their classrooms,” Gist said. “Our goal is to create a climate in every school where teachers can be innovative, creative, *and* accountable for results.”

State law requires the Commissioner to deliver an annual address on the status of education in the state to a joint session of the General Assembly (RIGL 16-7.1-4, Annual report by Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education). The R.I. Department of Education (RIDE) will post the address on the RIDE website, www.ride.ri.gov.

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